

AGRICULTURAL  
LABOURERS AFFAIRS  
AND  
SOCIALPOLICY IN HUNGARY

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The agricultural labour policy, like the modern social policy, usually has its origin in the fact that the labourer, as a citizen and the most important factor in production, has a right to maintain himself and his family in a manner which corresponds to his human dignity and to have the possibility of a certain degree of welfare and culture.

The labour policy of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture rests on this sincere basis. It is led by the conviction that the situation of the labourer must be ameliorated, the people must be cultivated and for his reason we must come as near to them as possible. Only when people feel the carefulness of the government, that is, when they are convinced that their amelioration is really desired by the government, do they show confidence in the present social order and adhere with sincere attachment to their employers.

Dex. Green

If we wished to relate everything which has been done by the agricultural department in the interest of the amelioration and improvement of the lot of the farm labourer, really we ought to deal with every branch of agriculture the improvements in every branch having been effected with special regard to the necessities of the small farmers and in the interest of their economic

progress. However, this would be too lengthy an undertaking.

Accordingly, we will only refer to those institutions which immediately serve the interests of the farm labourers.

The Ministry of Agriculture organised a special department for the affairs of agricultural labourers in the year 1897, which has two sections. Their spheres of activity are as follows.

## **Department of Agricultural labour.**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Section.**

Execution of the following laws. Regulation of the relations between employers and agricultural labourers (Law II:1898), law regarding the conditions of labourers employed at the water works, and of day labourers and labourers engaged in the building of ways and railroads (Law XLI:1899), law regarding contractors and auxiliary labourers (Law XLII:1899), law regarding the Insurance office of agricultural labourers and servants (Law XVI:1900 and XIV:1902), law regarding forest labourers (Law XXVIII:1900), law regarding the relations between tobacco growers and their labourers (Law XXXIX:1900): and finally the law regarding the relations between the farmer and his farm hands. (Law XLV:1907). The fixing of the third resort for breaches of the law and questions between labourers and servants. Arrangements for securing the uninterrupted conduct of harvesting and other agricultural processes. Preparation of laws.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Section.

The housing of labourers. Labour exchanges. Emigration and immigration. Home industry. Communal relief funds. Labourers' self aid associations, public libraries, organisation and support of lectures. Winter agricultural lectures and courses. Recompense of servants and labourers who have remained for a long time in the service of the same master. Support of the useful activity of persons interested in the welfare of agricultural labourers. Protection of labourers. Popular news papers and periodicals. The information office for agricultural labourers. The collection of material relating to the labour question.

### **Laws relating to farm labourers.**

Only a small part of the duty of the employer is written in positive laws and regulations, the greater part of his task being decided by the laws of humanity.

In view of the important agricultural and social interests involved in the relations between employers and labourers, Parliament has past the following special laws to enforce just conditions.

Law regulating the relations between employers and agricultural labourers; law II:1898. The conditions of labourers employed at the water works and of day labourers and labourers engaged in the building of ways and railroads; law XLVI:1899. Contractors and auxiliary labourers; law XLII:1899. Forest labourers; law XXVIII:1900. Law regulating the relations between tobacco growers and their labourers; law XXIX:1900.

The Insurance office for agricultural labourers and servants are dealt with by laws XVI:1900 and XIV:1902; the relations between farmers and their labourers by law XLV:1907, and finally, the building of houses for agricultural labourers by the law XLVI:1907.

The aim of all these laws is to secure legal protection for the interests of employers and labourers and to increase the comfort and prosperity of the labourer.

### **Labour Exchanges.**

The labour policy of the Agricultur Ministry is in the first place designed to relieve the most pressing evil — the want of employment. At the same time it aims at meeting the wants of agriculturalists who are short of labourers. The agricultural ministry in this connection relies upon an institution organised a long time ago, and seeks to develop this institution.

The Ministry regulated the agricultural labourers' exchange authorised by the law XII:(§. 7) 1898. Every town and parish has to appoint an official to whom employers can apply for labourers, while labourers can apply for work. This official keeps a register of applicants, enquiring for and offering work.

The registrar gives an answer to every request on the basis of his registers, and is not only obliged to answer letters in writing, by telegraph or telephone, but if the applicants demand it he is also obliged to inquire of other exchanges or employers. When demand and supply do not equalize each other the local exchange briefly

advises the municipality and the Minister of Agriculture of the applications made to it. There is one municipal exchange in the capital of every county (= vármegye = Komitat), run by the respective municipality.\* The registrar is endowed with authority and receives remuneration from the State for his services. The weekly reports of the parish exchanges are sent to the municipal exchanges of the respective counties, as are also the reports of the neighbouring municipal exchanges. These are put together, duplicated and sent to the exchanges of the neighbouring municipalities and to the parish exchanges of the respective counties. The aim is to make supply and demand equalize each other as much as possible in the immediate neighborhood, so that unnecessary travelling on the part of workmen may be avoided. Finally the Ministry of Agriculture endeavours also centrally to control the balancing as much as possible of supply and demand throughout the whole land.

The parochial and municipal labour exchanges send their reports to the Ministry, the necessary statistical data are registered and here answers are given to the inquiries of private persons and of exchanges.

The above mentioned organisation of the labour exchanges is the simplest imaginable and involves very little labour.

In the interest of supply and demand agricultural labourers, consisting of a group of at least five men supplied with a labourers' certificate, can travel to their

\* Municipality = is either a county, or one large town with separate jurisdiction.

working place and back to their residence at half price on the state railways (which may be said to cover the whole land).

The number of labourers for whom work has been found amounts yearly to 80,000, and the interest of those needing labourers and of the labouring classes continually increases and they resort with greater confidence to this institution. The agricultural ministry especially bears in mind the exchange for immigrants who have returned from America, so that the immigrant labourer may feel immediately on his arrival on Hungarian soil, that the guardianship of the Hungarian State is again extended to him.

In view of the great importance of the labour exchange as well as the favourable results in this field, the Ministry of Agriculture intends to further develop this institution. The Government will be strongly supported in this direction by the newly organized institution of agricultural inspectors, because henceforth, in little while the Ministry will have at its disposal in every municipality agents who will see that the labour exchanges are conducted on uniform lines, while at the same time due attention is paid to local circumstances.

### **Emigration.**

When the Government was dealing exhaustively with the subject of labour, the great question of emigration and immigration could not escape its attention. The

Ministry works without doubt with the labour exchanges against emigration, however, the Ministry of Agriculture considers it necessary to be well informed of the causes of emigration, and has accordingly instructed about 1500 of its provincial agents to apprise the centre of their respective experiences from time to time. This is the more necessary because emigration has doubtless its innumerable local causes, the removal of which could easily save a greater number of workers for the country. On the basis of the reports the Ministry acts as far as it is possible in its own sphere of activity; if however it is powerless to deal with the matter itself it eventually applies to other Ministries.

### **Teaching of agricultural home industry.**

The most important means of preventing emigration, as well as of improving the lot of the labourers is doubtless the provision of winter employment for them. One of the chief causes of the unfavourable situation of Hungarian labourers is the circumstance that owing to the predominance of corn-growing a great proportion of the labourers find work only in the summer months. Even then many hands can be engaged only during the harvest, whereas in the winter season a great part of the country people are wanting work. Consequently there are very often troubles in the households of the labourers. Even if labourers work enough in the summer months, that is to say during the harvest,

to enable them to secure their existence throughout the whole year, the majority of labourers lack foresight to distribute their savings proportionally for the necessities of the whole year.

For this reason the amelioration of the conditions of agricultural labourers, if at all possible, can only be effected by the adoption of a practical agricultural policy, which will enable the labourers to develop their whole working power and to find means of sustenance in every season of the year.

The Ministry of Agriculture carries on in this direction a very active work. Besides promoting more intensive cultivation, the arrangement of home industry courses during the winter belongs to it also, the number of which approaches already 500 and in which more than 15,000 labourers take part yearly.

The Ministry of Agriculture began this work in the year 1899 embracing in its scope all persons engaged in agriculture.

For the instruction of labourers in the several branches of home industry in the winter time the Ministry every year now holds courses, which last from six weeks to six months, in 500—600 communities throughout whole land. These courses are held when outdoor work has ceased. But the practical teaching of home industry is ordered by the Ministry of Agriculture in those schools in which the labourers' children at least 14 years old are taught. These schools are provided with the necessary instruments for the purposes of teaching.

From 1899 till now about 4000 home industry cour-

ses have been held, in which about 70,000 agricultural labourers have taken part, and adopted the practice of one or other branch of home industry.

The people are taught at these winter courses basket and broom making, mats and straw plaiting, also wood carving, in short to manufacture useful articles.

The manufacture of these articles does not require any special technical knowledge or any great manual cleverness. It can exist in spite of the competition of the greater industries and of machinery and provides winter employment.

At these courses great stress is laid upon the sufficient practical improvement of the labourer for the systemical, quick and cheap production of such articles, which are in daily demand on the markets.

The yearly income from the sale of articles prepared at the 500 winter cottage industry courses amounts to almost half a million crowns (one korona = 10 pence) which sum is paid as wages to the workmen in proportion to the work done.

The home industry courses are arranged by agricultural societies and clubs, agricultural committees of the County committees for developing industry, partly by cooperative societies for popular education and charitable institutions, by agricultural academies, schools for farm labourers, and by agricultural experts appointed and supported by the Ministry of Agriculture. In order to qualify teachers for the repetition schools, courses are organised by the Ministry of Agriculture during the summer holidays.

## **Cooperative Society for producing and selling home industry articles.**

The organisation of cottage industry cooperative societies also runs parallel with the development of cottage industry teaching.

Labourers taught and made efficient at the courses, are organised by the Ministry of Agriculture in cooperative societies that is in cottage industry establishments for the winter work.

To these cooperative societies, composed without exception of agricultural labourers, the Ministry of Agriculture gives moral and material support. Till 1910, 80 cooperative societies of this kind were organised and their shares amount together to 6271, while the number of members of the cooperative societies amounts this day to more than 5000.

The Ministry supports for the sale of the cottage industrial articles many commercial enterprises.

The nearly 100,000 cottage industry workmen who were employed in the winter of 1909, produced during a bare three months products amounting approximately to 1.000,000 crowns in value.

## **Popular agricultural lectures.**

Besides promoting cottage industry the Ministry of Agriculture endeavours to make known to the working people, chiefly by popular agricultural lectures and courses that knowledge which tends to lighten the burden of the labourers lives. The popular agricultural lectures are

given — with the material support of the Ministry of Agriculture — by agricultural societies and clubs by societies for popular education and by agricultural schools and agricultural experts. More than 4000 courses of this kind are held yearly and the number attending varies between 200,000—300,000. People are chiefly educated at these courses in the agriculture studies with special attention to local circumstances ; however the lectures are extended also to other topics such, as the laws and institutions affecting agricultural labourers, cooperative societies, rates and taxes railway carriage rates, insurance, methods of placing goods on the market, contracts, etc.

### **Labourers' assistance fund.**

According to law II (71 §) 1898, concerning the relations between employers and agricultural labourers, a fund was to be created in every community in the interest of agricultural labourers and servants. The aim of this fund is that deserving agricultural labourers and servants (holding a certificate) who temporarily have no other resource than this fund, should be helped by it, with the obligation of paying back. Now every municipality, of the land has organised a labourers' assistance fund for agricultural labourers holding certificates, who need assistance and who have got into a difficult situation through no fault of their own. These communal funds have several million crowns at their disposal. Assistance is granted by a committee consisting of labourers and of the administration of the community. It is usually given

without interest and with the obligation of repayment. The demand for repayment of the funds partially or wholly can be withdrawn in certain cases, while, in the case of death, it cannot be claimed from the heirs.

### **Consumers' cooperative societies.**

The labourers as consumers are taken as much as possible under the protection of the Ministry of Agriculture.

As these consumers' cooperative societies perform a very important part as organisations for self help of the village people and of the agricultural inhabitants, the ministry helps by giving a small grant when they first begin to stock their stores. The Ministry enables the people by this means to buy cheaply their chief necessities. This kind of assistance is of great value to the villagers, who often have to face numerous difficulties as regards the buying of these articles. The number of Hungarian cooperative societies is nearly 2000.

### **Agricultural labourers' and servants' Insurance office.**

(Budapest, V., Alkotmány-utca 16.)

This is one of the most important organisations designed to ameliorate the material situation of the workers and its effect is chiefly felt in insurance against accident.

The Agricultural labourers' and servants' Insurance office, organised under laws XVI. 1900 and XIV. 1902 is intended to enable agricultural labourers to provide

for their future. However to the advantages offered by this office, not only farm labourers and servants may lay claim, but every person engaged in agriculture can become a member, especially of that group in which allowances are made only in case, of death or the allainment of a certain age, to which any person can be admitted as a member without respect to his occupation.

Policies of insurance are issued by this *office which provide allowances in case of invalidity, death the allainment of a certain age and accidents. To the invalidity's allovance* members are entitled who in consequence of any bodily injury cannot earn more than half of the usual income of an agricultural labourer or servant, in the particular locality. By the *allowance in case of death*, members are enabled to help their own servants when the breadwinner dies. Law XIV. 1902 at the same time enables those funeral societies which, undertake the same class of insurance as the above, but in the most cases inefficiently, to be taken over by the office.

By the allowance on the *allainment of a certain age* assistance is assured on reaching a certain age, determined in advance. Finally the above mentioned laws have also introduced accident insurance, and have enforced compulsory insurance for agricultural servants and machine workers, the latter being the most exposed to accidents, in such a manner that employers and proprietors of machines should bear the expense of such insurance.

Law XIV. 1902 also provides that the office may

make allowances in exceptional circumstances, out of the reserve funds to those members who have lost their work by reason of their lengthy illness.

These allowances are the compensation for the loss of means of livelihood through those sicknesses which usually prevail most during the busiest season.

The Insurance office aids 1. *ordinary members*; 2. *extraordinary members*; 3. *those agricultural servants, for whom the employers pay the obligatory contribution*; 4. *agricultural labourers insured by special contracts*; 5. *agricultural servants insured as ordinary members*.

Anyone may become an *ordinary member*, who has applied once and been finally accepted as a member. There are four classes of ordinary members, as hereafter described.

Anyone (men, as well as women) may become a member of the first group who is engaged in any branch of agriculture, provided he has reached his fourteenth year and is not more than 35.

The member's subscription for the first group is 10 K 40 f. per annum.

Ordinary members of the first group who have paid their subscription during 25 years, are exempt from further payments, nevertheless they continue to enjoy the full advantage of their membership.

A member of the first group is entitled to an allowance in the following cases :

1. if after ten years' membership he becomes disabled from any cause, presumably for life, to such an

extent that he is not able to earn half the average yearly wages of a farm labourer or servant in his district (man, woman). The allowance (pension) is 10 K per month for life or until he is able to work again. If his incapacity should begin within ten years, and the member is not inclined to pay the subscription till he becomes entitled to be assisted the office refunds the membership subscriptions without interest, deducting therefrom any allowances which may have been paid out previously.

2. When a member dies but not in consequence of an accident, the office makes an allowance to the family :

|                                   |         |        |
|-----------------------------------|---------|--------|
| if membership has lasted at least | 5 years | 200 K. |
| « « « «                           | 10 «    | 250 K. |
| « « « «                           | 15 «    | 270 K. |

If a member dies leaving no family, the office pays 100 K funeral allowance. If the death of the member should occur within 5 years after admission the office refunds the membership subscriptions without interest to the family, deducting any allowances which may have been paid previously.

3. Members of the first group having reached their 65<sup>th</sup> year without having drawn any allowance whatever, receive a bonus of 100 K ; however if a member becomes incapable of work after his 65<sup>th</sup> year, he also gets the monthly allowance of 10 K. If an accident happens to the member the accident allowance is also due to him, and finally, if the member dies, his family receives the allowance provided in case of death.

4. When an accident happens to a member, he rece-

ives free medical treatment; when in consequence of an accident he becomes incapable of work for more than one week he gets one K daily for 60 days, and after 60 days he gets an allowance of 10 K monthly till he is able to work again, or else during his whole life.

The Insurance office is authorised in exceptional cases to make a special allowance amounting to 300 K to ordinary members of the first group, who in consequence of lasting sickness have become incapable of fulfilling the tasks they were under contract to perform and have thereby become unable to maintain themselves and their families.

Members of the first group may take out several membership books as follows: 5 Books without any preliminary authorisation, more than 5 Books with the special permission of the central office, but no member may take out more than 10 Books.

The conditions of entry for ordinary members in the second group are the same as in the first group except that members of the second group pay only half the subscription payable in the first group. Accordingly it is natural that members of the second group may only claim half of the allowances, except the accident allowance which is the same in both groups.

The subscription for members of the second group is yearly 5 K 72 f, halfyearly, 2 K 86 f.

*The third group of ordinary members* has been organized to enable the member to insure his servant solely against death. The yearly subscription for ordinary members of this group is 2 K 60 f, or halfyearly 1 K 30 f.

*In the fourth group* anyone is accepted without consideration of sex or age. The yearly subscription is 5 K 20 f, for a halfyear 2 K 60 f.

The ordinary members of this group assure an allowance to themselves or to other people on reaching a certain age, with the obligation, on the part of the member to notify on the occasion of his entrance, whether he assures the allowance for himself or for an other person.

Anyone man or woman may become an extraordinary member who is engaged in some branch of agriculture, irrespective of age.

The extraordinary member is only entitled to an allowance in cases of accident, of invalidity through accident, and of death through an accident.

### **Enrolment of members.**

Those wishing to become members of the Insurance office must present themselves either before the parish council (or some local committee).

The enrolment fee is the same in all groups viz. 2 K and must be paid in cash on the occasion of the application.

For taking out several membership books in the same group, only one enrolment fee is payable, but everyone is obliged to pay 1 K for the preparation of every book after the first.

In the book sent to the member by the central office there are forms for the purposes of paying subscriptions.

The subscriptions are paid by these slips to the post office, always halfyearly in advance to 30 June, or 31 December.

The membership fee for the first year is to be paid immediately after the delivery of the book as members only obtain their rights after paying the first half-year's fee. Those who intend to become extraordinary members, are obliged to pay in cash their membership fee, but they are exempt from payment of the enrolment fee.

The membership certificate is sent to the member by the central office.

### **The obligatory insurance of agricultural servants against accident.**

Every employer is obliged to pay yearly, in advance, 120 fillérs for the Insurance of every agricultural (outdoor) servant. It is legally forbidden to reckon this contribution in the salary of the servant or to compel the servant to pay it.

The parish council or surveyor of taxes draws up a list of employers and servants in connection with the general taxation, so that in this way the contribution of 120 fillérs is imposed and collected alone with the other taxes. Employers are obliged to make known immediately to the parish council or surveyor of taxes any changes occurring after the collection has taken place.

Those agricultural servants, however, who are not members of the Insurance office, but for whom the fee of

120 fillérs has been paid by their employers, are entitled to the same allowance as the extraordinary members of the Insurance office in case of accident, or invalidity or death caused by accident.

Those employers who do not pay the yearly fee of 120 fillérs for their agricultural (outdoor) servants in spite of the above mentioned obligation are liable for the whole damage arising out of their neglect, to their servants and their heirs.

### **The special insurance of workmen employed on agricultural machinery.**

The proprietor is obliged to have the men employed on the threshing machines, the slokers and those working the chaffcutting machine, insured as extraordinary members. He is also obliged to pay the membership tax (1 K) instead of the above mentioned labourer, unless the proprietor is convinced that the said labourer is already insured in the office against accidents.

Machine proprietors neglecting this duty, are responsible for the whole damage arising out of such neglect, to the said workmen and their heirs even in cases, where the proprietor could not be accused of other neglect of any sort, in the event of an accident happening during the work.

## The business of the Insurance Office during 1905.

*Number of members at the end of the following years.*

|                   | 1905  | 1906  | 1907  | 1908  | 1909  |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| I. group          | 20179 | 19914 | 20602 | 20509 | 20233 |
| II. «             | 3842  | 3595  | 2692  | 3729  | 3722  |
| III. «            | 214   | 342   | 580   | 763   | 714   |
| IV. «             | 2227  | 2304  | 2376  | 2474  | 2375  |
| Special Contracts | 6785  | 8170  | 11378 | 12343 | 11638 |
| Extraordinary     | 29183 | 29941 | 28240 | 27535 | 26176 |

**Servants insured for pension :** in **1905** 7624, **1906** 7726, **1907** 7751, **1908** 7645, **1909** 7385.

**Funeral societies taken over :** in **1905** two societies with 429 members; in **1906** two societies with 395 members; in **1907** three societies with 743 members; in **1908** seven societies with 2614 members; in **1909** seven societies with 2503 members.

**There were insured on the basis of the contribution tax of 120 fillér :** in **1905** 376,415, **1906** 379,452, **1907** 373,458, **1908** 374,482, **1909** 374,672.

## Labour movements, harvest strikes.

It is impossible for people having attention and support on every side, to remain insensible to their advantages. And doubtless the past years prove that beyond those movements caused by local unrest, no great troubles have occurred. No harvest strike of any great importance has happened since 1906. In this direction the beneficent work carried on by the Ministry in connection with its social policy, performs, without doubt, an important part. The forethought of the Ministry endeavours to

protect and defend employers against any breach of contract by the harvest labourers, by means of keeping reserve labourers on hand for filling up the places of those labourers who break their contracts. The chief officials of municipalities are instructed to inform the Ministry of any superfluity of labourers in their respective districts, so that the Government may be able to take care of the qualified workers. It is natural that as regards claims to reserve labourers, the Ministry adheres to its principle of making arrangements in these affairs, only with those employers who have no workmen bound to them by a regular contract according to Law II : 1898, and where the strike has not occurred through any fault on the part of the employers.

Employers claiming reserve labourers are also naturally bound to defray the cost.

The Ministry wishes in this way to defend the principle that where the State is called in, the interests of the labourers and employers receive equal consideration and it does not intervene in the struggle for the betterment of wages. The State confines itself to helping those employers who are injured and in need by labourers committing a breach of contract, thus preventing the conclusion of the harvest which is so important to the inhabitants of the whole land.

Only by working impartially is the Ministry able to fulfil its obligations in defence of the interest of the labourers as well as of the employers.

People who are uncultivated and ignorant are generally more responsive to an agitation against the State

and Fatherland, than those who have a more enlightened idea about the common effect of social life and of the course of agricultural life.

### **People's newspapers.**

Besides the above mentioned agricultural lectures there are many other methods employed to enlighten the people.

The agricultural inhabitants have in the Néplap (People's newspaper) founded and maintained by the Ministry and published in the Hungarian, German, Roumanian, Ruthenian and Servian languages a newspaper which aims not only at supplying the intellectual needs of the people but also seeks to instil right ideas of life into their minds. The Néplap appears weekly, every Saturday, in 65,000 copies.

### **People's Libraries.**

The people's libraries are intended, in another direction, to serve the great aim of educating the people by providing them with useful and entertaining literature.

The Ministry establishes a great number of these libraries every year so that the number now existing in the various villages is about 3000.

Every inhabitant of a village may use these libraries gratis according to the rules of the library.

## **Rewards for workmen and servants.**

Hungarian work-people appreciate not only material but also moral rewards. In view of this fact the Ministry of Agriculture for more than ten years has made awards to agricultural servants and labourers. Those servants and farm labourers who have served a long time in the same place, receive from the Ministry 50—100 Korona as a reward, on the basis of reports made by the local authorities and by agricultural societies. At the same time they also get a certificate which is a lasting memorial of their faithful service, and a proof that faithful work is duly esteemed by the State.

Experience in this connection continually proves that the Ministry is proceeding along right lines. It does the people good to see that not only mental work is appreciated, but also the hard and difficult work of the manual labourer. Every year 400 agricultural labourers and servants receive a certificate of recognition of services together with 50—100 Korona material reward. Besides this every year many labourers receive medals for their trusty services, on which occasion a great festival is held.

The Ministry recompenses parish councillors, clergymen, schoolmasters and doctors if they occupy themselves with the educating and uplifting of the people.

## **Harvest Festivals.**

It did very much to brighten the life of the rural labourers, when the Ministry of agriculture in 1899 urged

the agricultural societies to restore the old harvest festivals. The agricultural public took up the idea throughout the whole land, and harvest festivals were reestablished in increasing numbers. Their exhilarating proceedings which were reported in the Hungarian provincial press, did much to revive and strengthen patriarchal relations between employer and labourer.

### **Collection of data regarding wages.**

The Ministry of Agriculture constantly seeks to gain a more perfect and clearer view of the labourer's circumstances as only so can the interests of the work-people be properly looked after. The measures adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture for the collection and working up of data regarding agricultural wages also serve this aim. Firstly the Ministry endeavours to create with these data a uniform basis to show the incomes of day labourers, who form such an important proportion of agricultural labourers, therefore it has the number of working days spent by the day labourers in work collected, not only the yearly average but also for each season separately.

In order to get a clearer idea regarding the wages of servants the Minister of Agriculture has the wages of those servants paid by the month and the wages of the havi summások\* collected separately.

\* Havi summások = agricultural labourers without a strictly determined incom.

By this means it become possible to see how wages run in two distinct categories of workers.

Another innovation has been introduced with the object of making the statements regarding agricultural wages as clear and lucid as possible. Nowadays data regarding wages without board are collected, while in those places where labourers get their board besides cash payments, the statistical reports give the wages of day-labourers in one sum with the addition of the remuneration in goods. The reason for this is that now day-labourers are only paid in cash so that this method makes it much easier to gain a clear idea as to wages

### **Collection of data regarding the price of land and leases.**

There has been another important improvement as regards statistics concerning labourers. The Ministry at the end of every year gathers instructive data regarding the price of land and rents. The discontent prevailing among agricultural labourers, as well as their inclination to emigrate, is well known as arising from their longing for the soil and the huge difficulties experienced in acquiring land. The discontent among the people may be traced in many places to the fact that in spite of their strenuous endeavours they are unable to acquire a lease; consequently the Ministry can only form a clear idea of the factors concerned when it is kept well informed by the several counties of the price of land and rents.

## Law relating to Servants.

The new law dealing with servants came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1907. It regulated the relations between employers and agricultural servants. The law which is the fruit of well considered preparation bears the number XLV:1907. The Ministry intended in drawing up the principal clauses of this law to be fair and impartial. The law forbids and annuls agreements where labourers are engaged without any previously arranged contracts and where the labourer is not assured of a good wage.

This so called «robot» work (compulsory service) was exceedingly unpopular among agricultural labourers, and not being of any special importance to employer its abolition served to promote social peace.

In drawing up the new bill respecting servants the Ministry did not neglect to introduce into it the protection of labourers, for though the protection of agricultural labourers is differently arranged to that of industrial workmen, it is just as necessary as the latter.

The first thing the law had to do was to fix an age limit, under which no one might be engaged as servant. This age limit, in conformity with the interests both of the children and of employers is fixed at 12.

The law also provides against the possibility of persons being compelled to do work which is beyond their physical ability.

There is further protection for labourers in the more recent laws which prohibit «truck». These laws make it

illegal to compel servants to purchase for themselves or family, goods from the employer or any person indicated by him.

Space permits only the barest mention of those laws which regulate the questions of night rest as well as of Sunday rest. Further the laws regarding the medical treatment of servants as well as the schooling of their children are also of great importance to servants.

The employer is obliged if the illness of a servant ensues after entering his service, to defray the cost of medical treatment for the servant during 45 days; the law in its humanity even goes so far as to compel the employer to pay the cost of medical treatment for the wife of the servant and for his children under 12 years.

Likewise according to this law the employer is obliged to pay the school entrance fee for the servant's children. This last law seeks not only to benefit the labourer but also to promote the education of his children.

However probably the most important feature of the law is that it compels the employer to pay strict attention to the provision of good sanitary arrangements for his employers.

The housing of the workers is important not only as regards the contentedness of the people but also in sanitary and moral respects. The dwelling being one of the most important factors of the people's life, the housing question, from whatever point of view it may be regarded, is a great and in every respect an influential matter, therefore the law does not content itself

with enunciating general principles but precisely lays down that after the passing of the law, such labourer's dwellings shall be erected in which every married agricultural labourer, whether with or without children, is provided with separate rooms and larders.

### **Agricultural labourers' dwellings.**

The is strenuously endeavouring the problem of agricultural labourers dwellings. The majority of the working class having no land, has no alternative but to live in hired dwellings. These dwellings are open unsatisfactory from a moral, sanitary and economical point of view, while they are dear relatively to the wages of the labourers.

A good dwelling is one of the first necessities for the labourer. On this depends his health and the opportunity of recuperating after his exhausting toil.

The family hearth is also a moral factor which makes its wonderful power felt against the temptations of want or evil influences. A permanent dwelling assures the labourer of a home, teaches him loyalty to his fatherland and to seek and find happiness and enjoyment in the domestic circle. It teaches him further to respect the property of others, for those only realise the blessings of social institutions who themselves enjoy their protection and advantages.

However the correct solution of the housing problem is not only of interest to the individual labourer, but also to the whole country. It is enough perhaps to refer

to the many sanitary, moral, social and economical evils caused by overcrowding. Bad and overcrowded dwellings are the hot beds of crime, because the labourer lacking a home is led to seek amusement elsewhere. In this way the labourer usually begins to frequent the public house and steadily degenerates. Overcrowding has a destructive effect also on the public morality. The family ties are very loose where two or three families live together in one lodging and the children of different sexes grow side by side quite lacking the most elementary conditions of modesty.

The many thousands of workers which are annually lost for the purposes of national production by emigration, are to a great extent the victims of homelessness, and it can be said that want of a home and over-crowding are an economic and social loss to Hungary whose magnitude cannot be estimated. Trough the recognition of this very important fact, the Ministry of Agriculture was moved to provide the necessary sum in the budget of 1902 for the provision of agricultural labourers' dwellings. Although the sum provided by the budget of 1906 for the building of labourers' dwellings amounted to 300,000 Korona this sum proved insufficient to provide labourers' houses on any great scale. At this rate several decades would have been necessary for the solution of this problem even if the population remained the same as it is now.

The Minister for Agriculture in 1907 was led by this circumstance to the decision of asking for means from Parliament to enable him to solve the problem of hou-

sing the labourers more quickly. For this purpose a bill has been prepared, which grants exemption from taxes and fees and other advantages to labourers' dwellings, and also enables the 300,000 Korona provided by the budget, which was formerly a capital allowance, to be used as interest by municipalities and parish councils on money raised for the building of labourers' dwellings.

The above mentioned sum was just enough to give material assistance towards the cost of building 600 labourers' dwellings in one year, while the new bill is intended to enable 15,000 dwellings to be erected at once.

This law (XLVI:1907) came into force in the month of August 1907. Its chief enactments are as follows:

When a municipality or parish council is selling land to agricultural labourers for building dwellings; or grants loans or is selling or letting finished dwellings, the Minister of Agriculture: *a*) can have the necessary measurements sketches, plans, as well as the contracts and other documents prepared free of charge; *b*) it can take upon itself to charge the public treasury with an obligation towards the municipalities or parish councils of paying instead of the labourers and in their interest a sum amounting to 300,000 Korona; or the Minister for Agriculture is authorised to pay during 100 half years at most a determinate part of the capital and interest due in respect of the loan, or can pay for 30 years at most a determinate part of the rent (1. §.).

These advantages are granted only if:

*a*) the land is suitable; *b*) only Hungarian materials

are used in bulding ; *c*) the sale or lease of the land or houses, or the loan for building houses, serves the public interest and not that of the speculator ; *d*) the conditions of the sale or lease or of the loan and the whole scheme, are of odvantage to the labourers ; *e*) the agricultural labourers are not obliged to give any bills of exchange or undertake other obligations towards the vendor or lessor or the mortgagor ; *f*) the period for paying of the loan does not last more than 100 halfyears and the may be repaid before the agreed date at any time and in any instalments, without the payment of any compensation ; *g*) in the contract it is clearly stated that if the labourers or their widows or descendants pay the agreed rent for at least 30 years they become the owners of the property ; *h*) at least 10 labourers' dwellings are built ; *i*) the purchaser or the tenant are agricultural labourers and Hungarian subjects (2 §.).

All legal transactions and documents the letting or sale of such property are free from stamps and fees. (3. §.)

Entire exemption from taxes is granted for a period of 20 years (5. §.).

It is forbidden to issue public-house licences on the area allocated to the building of labourers' dwellings during the time fixed in §. 5 (6. §.).

Until the loan is repaid the property cannot be dis-trained upon except for liabilities connected with loan or purchase itself ; further the property cannot be united with other property, divided, mortgaged, alienated, or sublet to any other person without the permission of the

authorities. Even this permission can be given in exceptional cases (7. §.).

The Minister for Agriculture is authorised to spend the money which remains unused at the end of any budget year of the amounts voted for labourers' dwellings in creating and augmenting a «Fund for building agricultural labourers' dwellings» and he can make grants out of this Fund for building such dwellings (8. §.).

The Minister for Agriculture gives preference in granting these favours to those councils and municipalities which aid the scheme by granting free land for allotment gardens. Special consideration is shown to the districts where the provision of labourers' dwellings is rendered especially necessary by the danger of emigration (9. §.).

When the municipality or parish council does not comply with the conditions imposed by the Minister for Agriculture, he may transfer the privileges accorded by the present law to other bodies (10. §.).

The Minister for Commerce is authorised to have all materials necessary for building labourers' dwellings transported on the State Railways and on the lines enjoying a State subsidy at actual cost (11. §.).

According to the regulations the Minister for Agriculture sends his representative to the district where it is proposed to build agricultural labourers' dwellings with State assistance under law XLVI. 1907, in order to give information and instructions. The Minister for Agriculture then informs the municipality whether he is inclined to grant assistance for the proposed building.

When the labourers apply direct to the Minister for Agriculture, their petition is sent to the municipality concerned for investigation. When the municipality or the parish council is not inclined to take the steps prescribed in the regulations for building labourers' dwellings, if the Minister for Agriculture considers assistance by the State necessary, he can grant such aid to other legal bodies, for instance to a cooperative building society.

Dwellings designed to house several families cannot enjoy State assistance according to the law.

*In conformity with the above mentioned law, up to the end of September 1908, 39 municipalities and parish councils decided to borrow sums amounting to 13,426,000 Korona for building labourers' dwellings with a State assistance of 261,200 Korona. These sums provided for the erection of 11,716 labourers' dwellings. Of these 3200 were actually erected by the end of 1909.*

The houses are built by contract in most cases.

The authorities sell the house to the labourer on the following conditions; the labourer pays the price of the house in half yearly instalments extending over a period of from 20 to 30 years. In this way the labourer pays only 60 to 100 Korona yearly, this sum being less than the rent which he paid previously.

The purchaser is entitled to pay off instalments at any time without any compensation.

In case of death of the purchaser, all rights and duties pass over to his heirs.

The law is ideal of its kind because of its practical-

lity as well as its humane and patriotic intention. It provides a home for the poorest classes and it allows the grant of all possible facilities without demanding anything from the labourer in return and without placing any fresh burdens on the municipalities, parish councils, or the general community.

### **People's offices.**

The Ministry systematically supports the «Peoples offices» organised in the several communities. In these offices the people can obtain free of charge advice or information about the taxes, legal matters, rates, rents, police matters, legacies, surveying, and the military and other branches of the administration. This information is given by experts on a fixed day of the week, usually Sunday.

### **People's public halls.**

The Ministry has recently given support to communities in the organisation of «*People's public halls*». This support has enabled halls to be erected in which the work people may find gathered together many of the organisations created by the State in their interest, and may have opportunities of cultivating their minds by means of popular lectures and of enjoying occasional innocent amusements.

It is hoped that these halls will wean the people

from visiting public houses and so enable them to avoid the perils which lurk therein. The offices of the labour exchange, of the local committees of the above-mentioned Insurance office, the committee for the labourers' assistance fund, the people's office, the public library, reading-room for newspapers and tradepapers, courses of general and special instruction, interesting lectures, winter home industry courses, winter workshops, the credit bank, productive and distributive cooperative societies, the peoples music society, and so on, are to be found in these «Peoples halls». The retailing of spirits in the halls is forbidden.

### **Information office for the Agriculturalist.**

The above mentioned important institutions are completed by the «Information office for the Agriculturalist» organised by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1908. The object of this unpretentious institution is to give information to agriculturalists arriving in the metropolis from the country to arrange their own affairs. The staff at this office renders all the assistance it can, and if necessary to applies to the other Ministries. Parties for assistance by letter receive a written reply, while in case of personal application advice is given.

These may seem to be small matters, but still we think we are not mistaken in assuming that for that very reason this institution will have a great deal of work to do because these little matters play a great

part in the lives of the peasants, though they appear trifling to a townsman. The inexperienced villagers are often in doubt and do not know where to turn in the sea of houses and the labyrinth of offices of the metropolis. Now they have learned where to get information, the news will spread among the people that advice is quite disinterestedly given by an office closely connected with the Government and it is certain that this will inspire them with confidence.

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